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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by National Alliance of Women's Organizations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2008/1.

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Statement

NAWO, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, is an umbrella group representing and supporting women's organisations and individual members based in England. With a focus on gender and Europe, NAWO promotes gender equality and social justice utilizing the internationally agreed human rights instruments for all women. NAWO works alongside sister organisations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as the United Kingdom Joint Committee on Women, the national body of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland representing the concerns and needs of women in the United Kingdom at the European Women's Lobby.

In this, the 52nd meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, the theme, "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" addresses one of the core challenges facing those working for the advancement of women: the availability of sufficient resources to ensure positive sustainable change. NAWO believes that at this juncture it is crucial to make funding and resources more readily available towards initiatives which promote women's equality on all levels: internationally, nationally and locally. NAWO supports the strengthening of a single UN entity working for gender equality and women's empowerment. We believe that a well-resourced and funded UN women's entity will significantly contribute to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights, and, comprising OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM, will provide pioneering research, programs and initiatives that support member states and women's organisations across the globe.

In this way, the UN's resources should be spread more equally to enhance women's status. To ensure this is the case, NAWO calls on the UN to undertake gender budgeting itself – that is, to assess the impact of its allocation of resources on both women and men, boys and girls and to analyse the total amounts committed to women's equality globally. NAWO also supports initiatives to promote gender responsive budgeting and analysis by governments, thereby ensuring equality of access to public resources.

Gender budgeting requires action to be taken to encourage and promote women's participation in budgetary debates and decision-making. The under-representation of women within the UN and on other bodies is a reflection of continuing inequality between women and men and of women's lower status within societies globally.

NAWO further calls on the United Nations within its own system and on Governments - in particular, European governments - to require public and private bodies to appoint qualified women at Board and other senior levels, using quotas or other specific incentives and sanctions, in order to achieve gender balance (40% minimum women, 40% minimum men and no more than 60% of either sex), thus increasing democratic decision-making.

NAWO is pleased to see that the review theme is the role of women in peace building, peace keeping, and conflict prevention, and NAWO would like to draw attention to the disparity between the rhetoric of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the reality of implementation.

Equal participation of women and men in peace building at all levels needs to be addressed urgently. NAWO is particularly concerned that this is recognised and rectified in the areas of women in key position such as peace negotiations and peace missions.

NAWO calls on the United Nations system in and through all its bodies and agencies to assist with technical expertise in ensuring disaggregated statistics are collected to enable gender impact assessment in the area of peace building. Information gained in this way must be made available to governments so that steps may be taken to mitigate detrimental impacts.

NAWO further calls on governments – both from north and south – to encourage girls to pursue formal education, to train both women and men so that they understand the gendered nature of conflict especially violence against women and girls, and to ensure equal numbers of women take leadership roles, with the skills necessary for negotiation and conflict resolution.

NAWO calls on States Parties, the UN and civil society to work together towards the goal of gender equality as it affords both women and men enhanced lives, increased prosperity and greater opportunities.